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ABSTRACT

This brief issues booklet provides basic information about the role of the Catholic Church in Poland, the erosion of Communist party leadership over the past year (as of 1981), the rise of the Solidarity Union and the economic problems plaguing the Polish people. An introduction is followed by the following sections: (1) "History of a Millennium"; (2) "Communist Poland"; (3) "Solidarity"; (4) "Church, Farm, and Freedom"; (5) "Poland between East and West"; and (6) "1981 and Beyond: A Personal Epilogue." A list of discussion questions and an 11-item reference list conclude the booklet. (EH)

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Communism and National Renewal

by William E. Schaufele, Jr.

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Communism and National Renewal

by William E. Schaufele, Jr.

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1

Introduction

Poland shall not perish
As long as we are alive
What the alien power has taken away
We shall regain by the sword.

—from the Polish national anthem

There is little disagreement that in the period since July 1, 1980, Poland has undergone greater internal change than any Communist-ruled country in Eastern Europe. Neither those who regarded Soviet intervention as inevitable nor those who expected Poland to emerge completely from Soviet control have proved correct. But few could have predicted the degree of change which has occurred.

Before July 1, 1980, Poland was a Communist state—basically constructed on the Soviet model but nevertheless different from the others. It contained the usual panoply of Communist organizations—an all-powerful Politburo, a largely compliant Central Committee, a rubber-stamp party congress, a

parliament in which some debate occurred but which toed the party line, a state-owned economy except for the agricultural sector, a central planning and distribution system and control of the mass media. Its economic difficulties were different in magnitude from those of its allies but not different in kind. But it had a powerful and active Roman Catholic Church, mainly private agriculture, and dissent ranging from popular grumblings to active movements which published unofficial—meaning uncensored—periodicals.

After July 1980 Poland would be radically transformed. It was on July 2, 1980, that a relatively minor official appeared on Polish television to announce that the prices of some meats had been raised, effective the day before.

Although Prime Minister Edward Babiuch had informed a parliamentary session in April 1980 of the proposed increases, the regime, as in the past, had made no apparent effort to prepare the public psychologically for this change.

Strike action, initially centered in the Lublin area, began almost immediately, but the Polish media made no mention of it for several days. Contrary to past experience there was no violence, no marching, no physical confrontation with the security forces. Workers simply laid down their tools, stopped their activities and remained in their places of employment. The regime immediately began negotiations with representatives of the striking workers. The demands—for wage increases, better working conditions, availability of meat and other basic necessities—were largely nonpolitical, although everything is political in a Communist state. It has been estimated that the strikes over the following six weeks involved up to 900,000 workers.

In the middle of August the traditionally militant workers at the Gdansk shipyards went on strike. Initially demanding the same kinds of concessions from the regime as their colleagues elsewhere, the strikers submitted, within two days, a list of 21 demands—demands which went far beyond anything previously known. These included the right to strike, the right to form independent trade unions, the end of censorship, Church access to the media, and the release of political prisoners.

The degree of militancy and organization demonstrated by the

Warsaw, Nov. 10, 1980: Lech Walesa leaves the Supreme Court in triumph after it reversed a lower court ruling ordering Solidarity to insert a clause in its charter recognizing the supremacy of the Communist party.

Gdansk strikers, while not wholly unexpected, indicated that planning had probably been going on for some time. Confronted by an Inter-Factory Strike Committee and the selection of Lech Walesa, a discharged shipyard electrician, as the strike leader, the regime, which at first had tried unsuccessfully to bargain only with individual factory groups and to turn the public against the strikers, agreed to negotiate. In one form or another, it accepted nearly every demand, including the political ones. The Gdansk agreement of August 31, 1980, marked a watershed in postwar Polish history and eventually became the model for a whole series of other contracts throughout Poland.

Since the summer of 1980 Poland has gone through internal turmoil, change and crisis unprecedented in Eastern Europe. Solidarity (*Solidarność*), the new independent trade union, in eight months expanded to a claimed 10 million members, including one-third of the 3 million members of the Communist party. A peasant counterpart, Rural Solidarity, claiming 3

million members, was founded. Independent student organizations have been permitted. Candid and relatively uncensored news reports and commentaries have continued. Solidarity and other organizations have independent publications. Repeated leadership changes in the party have occurred, especially at the provincial and local levels. A democratically and secretly elected party congress met in July 1981. And there has been an 80 percent turnover in the membership of the congress, Central Committee and Politburo within a year.

Before the party congress, a Warsaw newspaper polled its readers as to which Polish institutions inspired their confidence. The results, although by no means scientific, were striking. Those institutions inspiring the most confidence were the Church, Solidarity and the army—in that order. The party finished 14th, although 33 percent of those responding did indicate confidence in the party.

What has happened and is happening in Poland obviously has the greatest significance for the Poles themselves. But these developments can also greatly affect East-West relations and the two superpowers, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

For the Soviet Union, events in Poland may signify the first time that the postwar mold imposed on Eastern Europe by the U.S.S.R. has been, if not broken, reshaped. Among Communist states monolithism may have given way to polycentrism—in the Kremlin-watcher's jargon. Soviet and other Eastern European Communist leaders must be asking themselves if Poland can truly be relied on as an ally; if communism can survive the degree of pluralism now visible in Poland; if the carefully constructed, militarily and economically controlled Soviet "empire" can retain enough cohesion to satisfy the age-old Russian search for security; if the new system can solve the obvious failures of the old; and if the Polish "disease" can be avoided in the rest of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union itself. Depending on what happens in the next few years, the stakes could be high and the effects felt not only in U.S.-Soviet relations but in intra-European relations as well.

For the United States and the West the Polish "experiment" also has great meaning. Will the Soviet Union, militarily strong but economically weak and ideologically unattractive, be more or less likely to use force—in Poland or elsewhere—as its hold over its former satellites decreases? Does the prospect of a more open and flexible Eastern Europe change the equilibrium of relations between Eastern and Western Europe? Can the West materially influence developments in Poland? Will the Polish experience lead the U.S.S.R. and its allies to reduce their increasing dependence on Western financing and technology? How will events in Poland affect the way 10 million Polish-Americans use their influence in Washington?

We can only conjecture the answers to these and other questions. But the first requirement in seeking the answers is to try to understand what is taking place in Poland and why. Poland is little known to most Americans, and what is happening there is so linked with its 1,000-year history that we need the perspective which a brief compendium of that history provides. No one—not even the leading players—can yet analyze exhaustively the current situation in Poland or accurately predict the future. However, a beginning can be made from the past.

2

History of a Millennium

Describing Poland after its partition among three other powers in the 18th century, an English historian stated, "The nation existed without a state." All countries and their peoples are products of their particular history, geography, culture and all the other factors which combine to make up the contemporary nation-state. Poland is no exception and, in many ways, the concept of "nation" as distinct from "state" is stronger there than in most countries.

Throughout its history of over 1,000 years, Poland has had moments of glory and tragedy, of empire and obliteration, of freedom and occupation, of independence and partition, but the Polish nation has never lost its identity or its vigor. It has been the victim of contending princes and dukes, kings and czars, fuehrers and commissars. Its borders have extended as far east as Kiev, the capital of Soviet Ukraine, as far south as the Black Sea, as far west as the Oder river and as far north as the Gulf of Riga. It has been invaded by the Mongols, Prussians, Swedes, Austrians, Nazi Germans, and both Czarist and Soviet Russians. In the 18th century it was subjected to three successive partitions involving Prussia, Russia and Austria and reemerged as an

independent state after World War I only to be invaded and partitioned once more by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union a scant 21 years later. Finally it was reborn as a Communist state under Soviet control after World War II.

The birth of Poland generally dates from 966 A.D. when King Mieszko I, through his marriage to a Bohemian princess, was baptized as a Roman Catholic and spread Christianity throughout his lands, unifying the country under one religion. Ever since then the fate of the nation and the Church have been closely linked. During the next 1,000 years the fortunes of the Polish people waxed and waned.

After an initial period of integration and unification, the kingdom went into eclipse when Boleslaw III, before his death in 1138, divided Poland among his four sons, appointing one to act as "senior." In the process of vying for supremacy, the sons and their heirs dismembered the country, and so it remained for two centuries. The process of disintegration was checked by the unifying resistance to the Mongol invasion (1241–42), but it was not until the reign of Casimir III the Great in the early 14th century that most of Poland was reunified. The constitutional, administrative, economic and educational reforms which Casimir instituted made Poland an important European power. It was during Casimir's reign that Poland gave asylum to large numbers of Jews fleeing Germany; they were to become the backbone of Polish commerce, an activity which the Polish landed gentry disdained.

The accession of the Jagiellonian dynasty in 1382 marked the beginning of four centuries of consolidation and expansion in which Polish culture and influence flowered. Poland was united with Lithuania in 1386, making the country four times as large as the original kingdom and over twice as large as present-day Poland. The first three Jagiellonian kings consolidated the union by breaking the power of the Teutonic Knights in Pomerania and along the Baltic coast. They established the border only 90 miles west of Moscow. And they annexed Bohemia and parts of modern-day Hungary. Internally, the power of the nobility grew and a form of parliamentarianism was established.

The period of 1492–1572, often characterized as Poland's Golden Age, was not a peaceful one. Invading Turks, Tatars and Muscovites threatened the outlying areas of the Polish empire—present-day Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania and Rumania. Poland not only survived all of these conflicts, but it simultaneously made progress toward unifying what was then known as a commonwealth.

The full unification of Poland and Lithuania was achieved in 1569 with the creation of a two-chamber parliament and one of the earliest constitutional monarchies, interestingly enough known as a Royal Republic. Domestic and foreign trade boomed and spirited intellectual activity flourished. The second univer-

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sity in Central and Eastern Europe had been established in Krakow in 1364. It was there, during the Golden Age, that Nicolaus Copernicus first studied astronomy, which eventually led to his revolutionary planetary theory. It has been estimated that 25 percent of the Polish population could read and write by 1580, an astonishing proportion compared to the rest of the world.

The Golden Age was followed by the Silver Age (1572–1648). In a brief interregnum, the principle of an elected monarch was institutionalized, thus increasing the power of the nobles at the king's expense. Eventually the power of the nobility was concentrated in a handful of landed families who could organize or "buy" the support of the less affluent nobles—the beginning of the end of effective political organization. The parliament (*Sejm*) in the mid-16th century adopted the *liberum veto* system, that is, legislation had to be passed unanimously, which meant it could be blocked by the objection of any single member. This frequently brought the business of government to a complete standstill.

It was during the Silver Age that Poland became known as the "granary of Europe" and enjoyed an economic boom. Farm estates were enlarged, the land was exploited and so, too, was peasant labor. Poland's image as a granary has endured. Even though modern Poland is less than half its former size and no longer occupies the rich lands it did 400 years ago, some Poles and foreigners alike still think of it as a rich agricultural country, forced to sell its excess production to the Soviet Union. Actually, Polish land, with few exceptions, is poor in quality, and the country has not been self-sufficient in agriculture since it lost the eastern lands in 1945.

After 1648 Poland was frequently a battlefield where Poles fought Cossacks, Tatars and Russians, Swedes and Turks. Perhaps more important for modern Polish history, Poland's territory became a pawn in the fierce competition between Russia and Prussia. Peter the Great, in blocking King Frederick William I's effort to annex land the Prussian claimed, gained control of the Baltic seacoast in 1716. Frederick II the Great later annexed

Silesia. And Poland was the stage for major battles between Prussia and Russia during the Seven Years' War (1756–63).

Partition: Eclipse of the Polish State

The increasing weakness of the Polish regime combined with the incessant conflicts between Prussia, Russia and Austria—all of which used Poland to launch attacks on their adversaries and as a potential source of additional land and resources—led to the First Partition of Poland. For all practical purposes, the partition by Prussia, Russia and Austria in 1772 ended Poland's existence as an independent state for a century and a half—until 1918.

The First Partition deprived Poland of 28 percent of its territory. This so shocked Polish leaders that they enacted a series of reforms, including abolition of the liberum veto and other obstructions to effective government. The reforms culminated in the Constitution of May 3, 1791, which established the concepts of "people's sovereignty"; the separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judiciary; and the responsibility of the cabinet to parliament. It was the first written constitution since the U.S. Constitution of 1789, and the anniversary of its adoption is still celebrated by people of Polish origin all over the world.

The reforms were considered so dangerous by Russia that it invaded Poland in 1792. This led to the Second Partition, which involved only Prussia and Russia.

The Second Partition in turn precipitated a Polish revolt in 1794 led by Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who had fought with distinction in the American Revolutionary War. Despite some initial successes the revolt was eventually crushed, and the remainder of Poland was subjected to a third and complete partition in 1795.

Although Poland had suffered many vicissitudes during the preceding eight centuries, the next 123 years of Polish history played a large, almost determining role in forming modern Polish attitudes toward many issues. The partition of Poland among three foreign powers snuffed out the existence of a Polish state but, at the same time, it strengthened and intensified the feeling of Polish nationhood and nationalism.

Not that the situation within Poland remained static—far from it. Initially, for instance, the Polish Constitution, culture and administration remained relatively unaffected in the Russian sector, in part because Russia simply lacked qualified administrators. In the other two sectors, however, Polish officials were usually replaced by Prussians and Austrians.

In 1807 Napoleon Bonaparte established the semi-autonomous Duchy of Warsaw after he defeated the Prussians. However, after his advance on Moscow in 1812 failed, the Duchy fell under Russian rule. The Congress of Vienna (1814–15), which redrew the map of Europe after Napoleon's downfall, eventually created a Kingdom of Poland (or Congress Poland as it came to be called) within the Russian empire. Although Congress Poland had its own Constitution, parliament and army, the Russian czar ruled harshly, without regard for the provisions of the Congress of Vienna. In 1830 and again in 1863 the Poles rebelled unsuccessfully against Russian rule; they rose against Prussia in 1846. After 1864 the control of the three partitioning powers, in differing ways, was total.

The Russian sector of Poland was gradually "Russified" over the years. Schooling was in Russian and the institutions of higher education became Russian. Similarly, in the Prussian sector of Poland, German became the language of instruction. The Prussians, however, did develop the economy and therefore the skills of Polish workers in the area. Only in the Austrian sector of Poland did Polish remain the teaching language. And indeed the Poles were represented in the Austrian parliament as the "second" nationality in the multinational Hapsburg Empire. This period also was marked by massive emigration, mostly from southern Poland to the United States. Other large Polish émigré groups, including a great proportion of the politically active aristocracy and intelligentsia, lived in France and Germany.

During this whole partition period, Poles who remained in the homeland organized themselves into secret societies or, later, into political parties with the aim of reconstituting an independent Poland. Some groups engaged in revolutionary violence while others pursued a more evolutionary policy.

The three main political parties of post-World War I Poland were in fact established during the partition period, although not all of them were allowed to operate openly in Poland. National Democracy (ND) under the leadership of Roman Dmowski emerged in 1905 but had its roots in earlier political groups dating back to 1886. Since it initially advocated only Polish autonomy, it was allowed to function in the Russian sector. The Polish Socialist party (PPS) was founded in 1892. Operating clandestinely, it split in 1905–6 into a nationalist wing, led by Jozef Pilsudski, and an internationalist wing, which eventually merged with Rosa Luxemburg's small Communist organization, the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. The third major party, the Polish Peasant party (PSL), came into being in 1907 in the Austrian sector and participated in Austrian politics. No Polish political grouping was tolerated in the German sector, which had been fully integrated into Bismark's Reich in the late 19th century.

Independence, 1918–39

Poland once more became a battlefield during World War I, but Polish patriots saw a possibility of exploiting the conflict to regain Polish independence. Dmowski and his group formed the Polish National Committee in Paris in 1914 and supported the Russian war effort. Pilsudski, however, formed the Polish Legions which fought with the Austrian forces against Russia. Pilsudski eventually became disillusioned with the Central Powers when he realized they opposed a fully independent Poland and that independence could only be achieved through an Allied victory, followed by the gradual collapse and disintegration of the three partitioning powers. He and many of his supporters were eventually interned in Germany.

The success of the Russian Revolution in 1917, which both Dmowski and Pilsudski opposed, helped bring their groups together. Dmowski was not interested in associating with a Communist Russia and thereafter cooperated with the Western Allies. Pilsudski was well-known for his hatred of Russia, Czarist and Bolshevik alike. The fact that President Woodrow

Wilson had made independence for Poland the thirteenth of his famous Fourteen Points was an added reason for cooperating with the Allies.

Although the two men worked together in 1918, with Dmowski as head of the Polish delegation to the Versailles Conference and Pilsudski as acting chief of state and army commander in the newly created independent Poland, Pilsudski was the dominant force during the period 1919–39. Even though he died in 1935, his political heirs dominated Polish politics for the next four years, until the Nazi invasion.

The re-creation of an independent Poland in 1918 was followed by a series of events which sowed the seeds of later instability and unrest in Central Europe:

▶ the creation of a Polish Corridor to the sea, with the port of Danzig (now Gdansk) as a "free city" under the administration of the League of Nations, which became the basis of future claims against Poland by both the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany;

▶ the holding of plebiscites in the regions of Silesia and Masuria to determine whether they were to be joined to Poland or Germany, with results that were unsatisfactory to both parties;

▶ the division of the area of Cieszyn in Silesia between Poland and Czechoslovakia, leaving a Polish enclave inside the latter; and, finally,

▶ the creation of more than 80 political parties, a reflection of the Polish zest for pluralism. Some were ethnic, but many were composed of both Poles and ethnic groups, which splintered from other parties. Poland's population was heterogeneous: only 65 percent were ethnically Polish; the rest belonged to minority groups (Ukrainians, White Russians, Germans, Jews), many of them hostile to each other and to the Poles.

As the Soviet Union, following the defeat of Germany and the uncertainty over the new Polish republic's boundaries, advanced its western border from the Dnieper to the Bug rivers between 1918 and 1919, the infant state of Poland quickly organized an army which drove the Soviet forces all the way to Kiev and recaptured territory in the north, including Wilno. The Soviets,

as internal resistance to the Lenin regime crumbled, counterattacked and by August 1920 were at the gates of Warsaw. But Pilsudski, despite his lack of formal military training, perceiving a weakness in the Soviet front, counterattacked and drove the Red Army east. The Treaty of Riga, signed in 1921, restored the Polish eastern boundary on the Dnieper and again gave Poland Wilno and Lvov, both important commercial and intellectual centers in Polish history.

Internally, although preserving democratic forms, Pilsudski ruled as an autocrat supported by the army, led primarily by his former officers of the Polish Legions. After 1922 he formally "retired" from politics but continued to exert great influence. Concerned with the direction and insufficiencies of the regime, in 1926 he rallied his former Legion commanders and overthrew the government. Although he refused the Polish presidency and would take no official position except that of minister of defense, Pilsudski in fact ruled Poland.

Whatever the popular affection Pilsudski enjoyed, he was never able to form a democratically elected government. The ND and the Peasant party were the most powerful political groups. When he did form a nonparty bloc to overcome parliamentary hindrances to his policies, he was still unable to win the majority needed to amend the Constitution as he wished to do.

Pilsudski and his supporters tried to follow an independent foreign policy, consistent with the longstanding Polish hope of avoiding being a pawn, a battleground or a dependency of either Germany or Russia—or the Soviet Union. Traditionally there have been two schools of thought in Polish foreign policy: the romantic, which asserted Poland's independent role; and the realistic, which believed that Poland must inevitably become associated with either Germany or Russia for its own protection. As Dmowski once phrased it: "Either Russia or Germany but never both."

The new republic under Pilsudski reflected the romantic tradition; it even expected that by pursuing a policy of independence it could become an important European power. The policy was based on a gross underestimation of German and Russian

hostility to Poland's existence and of their desire to reverse the provisions of the Versailles and Riga treaties. Much as Pilsudski hated the Russians, he had no intention of allying Poland with Germany. Instead, Poland concluded nonaggression agreements with both the Soviet Union and Germany. In 1921 it had allied itself with France and, early in 1939, with Britain. Psychologically, Poland took comfort in those alliances, and it ignored what was obvious to any objective observer—that in the event of attack neither France nor Britain could provide immediate assistance.

Poland was further weakened by Pilsudski's and others' failures to modernize the Polish armed forces. Few armies have the élan and esprit of the Polish army, but esprit was not enough when the equipment and organization of the defense forces remained hopelessly out of date.

In retrospect, Poland, from 1919 to 1939, had boundless problems. Militarily, its armed forces were unprepared and unequipped for modern warfare. Economically, the country's development suffered from neglect. Tension with both the Soviet Union and Germany was almost constant—relieved only occasionally by short-term considerations of Central European politics, which forced one or both to concentrate their attention elsewhere. Internal tension was exacerbated by the failure, despite relative freedom of speech, to achieve even nominally democratic rule in the face of a determined autocrat like Pilsudski. There was continuous friction among the various nationalities in Poland, exemplified during World War II by the reported atrocities carried out by the Ukrainians and Lithuanians recruited by the Nazis. The attempt to play a skillful and clever game between the Soviets and the Germans failed. And at least as long as the World War I Allies were unwilling to make their weight felt, there was no way to forestall German demands for the return of the Polish Corridor and Danzig. On September 1, 1939, Poland became the first World War II victim of the Nazi blitzkrieg, and was again partitioned when the Soviet Union invaded from the east on September 17. Independent Poland disappeared for six more years.

3

Communist Poland

Poland emerged from World War II as perhaps the most deeply scarred country with the exception of Germany itself. Initially occupied by both Nazi Germany and the U.S.S.R., it had later been totally occupied by Germany. Subsequently, when Soviet forces had driven the German army westward, Poland once again had become a battlefield for the two large powers and, at least for a time, had been subjected to Soviet occupation.

The physical devastation was vast. Warsaw itself, as a result of war damage and a deliberate German effort to level it, suffered up to 85 percent destruction, according to some observers. More important, Poland lost 6 million people, or about 17 percent of its prewar population. Over half of those who died were Jews, who numbered 3.5 million in 1939. Only 620,000 people were killed as a result of military activity. The rest were executed in concentration camps, killed in city or ghetto reprisals, or died as a result of conditions in the camps or the generally poor living conditions in wartime Poland. The population of Poland was further depleted as a result of postwar exchanges of territory and forced or voluntary repatriation. The population immediately

after the war was estimated at 23.6 million, down from 34.8 million in 1939.

The whole of Poland was pushed geographically westward some 125 to 150 miles as a result of boundary changes after the war. The eastern area lost to the Soviet Union exceeded the gain represented by the German territory east of the Oder-Neisse river line. Many Poles still have a strong attachment to the eastern lands even though most of those who lived there chose to be resettled in present-day Poland.

Polish politics did not take a wartime holiday. Many Polish political leaders fled Poland in 1939 and established a government-in-exile, first in France and, after 1940, in London. Many of the leaders of the small Polish Communist party, which had been dissolved by the Communist International, or Comintern, in 1938, fled to the Soviet Union.

Resistance groups were organized in Poland almost immediately after the German and Soviet occupations. The largest was the Home Army (AK), directed by the government-in-exile. The Soviet Union had annexed the areas it occupied and deported large numbers of Poles to the Soviet interior, many to slave labor camps. After the Nazi attack on the U.S.S.R. in 1941, the government-in-exile made its peace with Moscow. Poles in the U.S.S.R. enlisted in Polish units, organized and trained by the Soviet army, and they were commanded by Polish General Wladyslaw Anders. When the Soviets, over the objections of the Western Allies and the Polish military leaders, insisted on committing the Polish forces to battle in separate units rather than as a national force, most of the Polish units departed the Soviet Union. Under General Anders, 230,000 fought with distinction in North Africa, Italy and Western Europe. Moscow subsequently recruited a force from among the Poles who remained in the Soviet Union. They were commanded largely by Soviet officers since most of the surviving prewar Polish officer corps had left with Anders or had escaped to the West.

Well after the Home Army was founded, a second resistance group known as the People's Army (AL) was organized by the Polish Workers' party (PPR). The PPR was the official name of

the Polish Communist party, which the Soviet Union reconstituted in 1942.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the London government-in-exile became increasingly strained as the U.S.S.R. reiterated its determination to retain the eastern territories after the war. Relations were finally severed over the question of responsibility for the Katyn Forest massacre. In 1943 the Germans announced the discovery of mass graves of over 10,000 Polish officers executed by Soviet authorities in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk in 1940. The Polish authorities in London insisted on an investigation by the International Red Cross. The Soviets claimed the executions were the work of the Germans and used this demand as a pretext to break relations. The German version has been generally accepted in the West by objective observers.

Thereafter there were essentially two Polish political groups: the London government-in-exile, a coalition of prewar Polish party leaders, directing the Home Army, which claimed a strength of 380,000 men and women; and the PPR, directed from Moscow, whose People's Army operated in conjunction with the Red Army.

Warsaw Uprising

The most concentrated resistance to the German occupation took place in the capital. In 1943 Warsaw's Jewish population rose against the Germans in a desperate and heroic struggle doomed to failure. A number of factors combined to drive the Jews into open rebellion. They had been pressed into a smaller and smaller ghetto; they were forced to select people for deportation and labor details; they realized that Jews were actually being exterminated; and they were receiving fewer and fewer services and goods, including food. However, general knowledge of the "Final Solution," the elimination of all Jews, was not yet widespread or simply was not believed.

More significant perhaps, in terms of Poland's future, was the Warsaw uprising of 1944. It began on August 1 and lasted for 63 days. Some aspects of this event, which captured the attention of

the world, are subject to dispute. According to one version, as Soviet troops moved closer to Warsaw, Radio Moscow called upon the citizens of Warsaw to rise against the German occupation. However, the Soviet offensive stopped on the outskirts of the city, and the Red Army stood by as the Home Army was defeated and the city of Warsaw was systematically destroyed by the occupying Germans. According to this version, Moscow deliberately provoked the annihilation of the largest and most effective Polish resistance group, which also happened to be anti-Communist, in order to destroy a potentially effective postwar opposition to Soviet domination. A variation of this version is that, although the Soviet forces had indeed reached the outskirts of Warsaw, they were forced to retreat by German counterattacks on their exposed salient, which had advanced ahead of the rest of the Soviet forces. The fact that the Soviets refused landing rights to Allied aircraft, which could have dropped food and supplies to the Polish resistance in Warsaw but needed to refuel in the Soviet Union, tends to support the arguments of those who believe the Soviets deliberately sought the defeat of the Home Army.

Another version, however, maintains that the London government-in-exile wished the Home Army to liberate Warsaw before the Soviets arrived in order to strengthen and reinforce its claim to legitimacy as the postwar ruler of Poland. If true, the decision to launch the uprising may have been precipitated ten days earlier by the Soviet-supported establishment of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN)—generally known as the Lublin Committee—in Chelm. The Lublin Committee posed a direct threat to the hopes of the London government-in-exile.

Whatever one's view of this historic event, the result was the destruction of the military arm of the government-in-exile and a significant boost to the aspirations of the Polish Communist leaders. Their quest for power was further encouraged by the Western Allies' inability or unwillingness successfully to challenge the Soviet claim to the eastern territory annexed in 1939. However, the history of postwar Poland would probably have

been no different in any case, since Soviet troops effectively occupied the country. The U.S.S.R. certainly would not have permitted Poland to strike out on an independent, probably pro-Western course which could have threatened Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.

With Poland's eastern boundary settled by Soviet fiat in January 1945, there remained the question of the western boundary. The Soviets and the Poles demanded the so-called Oder-Neisse line, approximately 150 miles west of the prewar boundary. The Allies strongly resisted this demand at the Potsdam Conference in 1945, but they acquiesced in and actually facilitated the resettlement of the German population from the area. The Allies accepted the Oder-Neisse line, first as a temporary boundary but later, in the absence of a permanent peace treaty—as of 1981 still to be accomplished—as the de facto final frontier.

The Soviet Union did agree to Western demands for a coalition government in Poland—but it was a coalition more in name than substance. Organs of the Lublin Committee had already been transformed into a provisional government and parliament, and the People's Army had been integrated into the First Polish Army, which then became the Polish People's Army. Nevertheless Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, the prewar Polish Peasant party leader who had been prime minister of the government-in-exile, returned to Warsaw in July 1945 to become a deputy prime minister along with PPR leader Wladyslaw Gomulka in a Provisional Government of 20 cabinet members, 17 of them from the Lublin Committee.

Making of a Satellite

During the next 18 months the Polish Communists consolidated their position in what has become the classical Communist formula. With the daunting help of the Soviet Union, they created trade unions, mass organizations and front groups, and infiltrated existing groups. The establishment of Polish national authority over territory gained from Germany and the resettlement of the population from the land lost to the Soviet Union

provided special opportunities to manipulate circumstances to their own advantage. Even Mikolajczyk had to organize a new Polish Peasant party when the old one was successfully infiltrated.

Parliamentary elections were held in January 1947. The Communist PPR and four other parties presented a single list of candidates while the new Peasant party offered an independent

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list—the only party permitted to do so. The elections were rigged in favor of the Communists and their allies; intimidation and terror were commonplace; only the Communist-led list of candidates had access to the media; Peasant party meetings were broken up, its candidates often arrested; and the police prevented

voters from casting their ballots in secret. The results were unsurprising: 417 seats to the Communist-led list, 27 to the opposition. Thus the Communists legitimized their regime by an election victory they had used any and all means to obtain.

The monopoly of power in the hands of the Polish Communists and their Soviet backers had not prevented the formation of an anti-Communist resistance as early as September 1945. It took the Communist party, using the organs of the government, the militia and the army, two years to quell that resistance. Casualties were heavy. Gomulka himself later wrote that over 20,000 Communists and several thousand militia and army personnel had been killed. There are no confirmed figures of deaths among the anti-Communist resistance.

Full consolidation of power took the Communists somewhat longer. After the 1947 elections a new government was formed with Boleslaw Bierut, later first secretary of the PPR, as president and Jozef Cyrankiewicz, a leader of the Polish Socialist party, as prime minister. Gomulka remained as a vice prime minister, but Mikolajczyk was dropped and a few months later fled Poland. In 1948 the Polish Socialist party and the Communist Polish Workers' party were merged and renamed the Polish United Workers' party (PZPR). A United Peasant party (ZSL) and a Democratic party (SD) favorable to the Communist regime were also formed.

One of the final steps in the consolidation of Communist power in Poland was the purge of Gomulka in 1948. Gomulka, significantly, had been the secretary-general of the PPR at its founding in German-occupied Poland and thus automatically was the political head of the Communist People's Army. Unlike many of the other party leaders he did not spend the war years in Moscow. As Stalin moved to create a monolithic Eastern Europe, including the formation of the Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform, in 1947, Gomulka objected. He had also supported a moderate stance toward Tito's Yugoslavia. Moscow categorized Gomulka as a "rightist-nationalist" deviationist and removed him from all of his posts. He was actually incarcerated for three years.

The Cow Is Saddled

By the end of 1948 Poland was firmly in the hands of the Communist regime and under Soviet control. There remained only one more move to complete the political transformation: the formation of the National Unity Front in 1951, which included the PZPR, the United Peasant party and the Democratic party as well as the mass organizations. The Polish Communists controlled and manipulated the National Unity Front for their own purposes.

Like most of its Eastern European neighbors, Poland was forced to adopt the Soviet system and follow the Soviet model in structuring the government and party which ruled Communist Poland—this despite the fact that Stalin allegedly once remarked that the imposition of communism in Poland was like trying to saddle a cow.

The years 1948–56 probably represented the nadir of Communist Poland; the "Sovietization" of the country was never more pronounced than during this period. With the cold war increasingly dominating international affairs, the Soviet Union demanded orthodoxy and subservience from its allies in Eastern Europe. The term "Soviet satellite" had real and accurate meaning. Not only was Poland denied the right to make independent decisions, even on internal matters, but it also suffered the ultimate indignity of having a Soviet marshal, Konstantin Rokossovsky, as minister of defense and commander in chief of the Polish People's Army. Soviet officers held other high positions in the Polish armed forces, and Soviet officials held top posts in the government, particularly in the security services.

The death of Stalin in 1953 did not produce any immediate relief, though Moscow did begin to relax its grip—none too rapidly, however, in the case of Poland. Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement in 1955 and the dismantling of the Cominform in 1956 contributed to the general easing of Stalinist control over Eastern Europe. And in Poland, writers and academic figures began to publish critiques on the Polish political situation which inevitably pointed toward the "Polish road to socialism."

Poznan Riots

The death of the PZPR First Secretary Bierut in 1956 necessitated a change in Polish leadership. Bierut was replaced in March by Edward Ochab, but Gomulka, who had been released from prison in 1954 after three years without trial, was lingering in the wings waiting to be rehabilitated.

Then, in June 1956, Polish workers engaged in their first action which led to the fall of a Polish Communist leadership. Workers in Poznan rioted for better living conditions and greater economic and political freedom. Local internal security forces were unable to control the situation, and the army refused to fire on Polish workers. Finally an elite internal security brigade from Warsaw suppressed the rioting but with such brutality that even greater dissension spread throughout the country.

As public discontent grew, the PZPR leadership was under increasing pressure not only to change economic policies, which it had begun to do in a tentative way, but to change the leadership as well. This pressure coincided with the readmission of Gomulka to party membership in August 1956.

Why did Gomulka, who had been the first Communist party leader in Poland after the war and had led Poland not only into communism but also into the Soviet camp, become the beneficiary of popular support? Gomulka was the people's and the party's choice in a state dominated by one party because he was perceived as a Pole first and a Communist second; because he appeared to promise a better life and a more open society; and because he might reduce Soviet influence. Thus, eight years after his ouster at the behest of the Soviet Union, the rightist-nationalist deviation of which he was then accused had become the very reason for his political popularity. He was seen as someone who had defied the Soviet Union, had courageously defended himself, and was above all a Polish nationalist.

The Soviet Union, however, was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of a Gomulka regime and the internal liberalization that would probably accompany it. Communist party Chairman Nikita S. Khrushchev led an uninvited and unexpected Soviet delegation on a visit to Warsaw in October 1956 just as it became

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Oct. 24, 1956: Three months after his readmission to the Polish Communist party, First Secretary Wladyslaw Gomulka addressed one of the largest street gatherings ever seen in Warsaw.

apparent that Gomulka, only three months after being readmitted to the party, was about to become first secretary of the Communist party once again. At the same time, Soviet troops stationed in Poland started to move toward the capital. Polish troops loyal to Gomulka responded by taking up defensive positions around Warsaw.

Discussions between the two party leaderships were described in a Polish commentary as "temperamental," but there was no armed clash as there would be in Hungary. Soviet troops were recalled to their garrisons, Khrushchev returned to Moscow apparently satisfied that the "Polish October" would not go beyond permissible limits, and Gomulka was formally named first secretary. To what extent the mounting crisis in Hungary—which exploded only three days later—may have affected the Soviet decision is unknown.

Khrushchev, in his memoirs, is relatively candid about the situation at that time. He claims that Gomulka told the Soviet delegation that, if Soviet troops were not stopped, "something terrible and irreversible will happen." Khrushchev added, "As we began to calculate which Polish regiments we could count on, the situation began to look somewhat bleak"—this despite the dominant position of Soviet officers among the armed forces. Khrushchev concluded, "It would have been a fatal conflict with grave consequences that would have been felt for many years."

Polish Winter, Czech Spring

Rokossovsky and other Soviet officers and most of the Soviet technical advisers to the Polish regime returned to the Soviet Union. A "status of forces" agreement which gave the Poles some control over the Soviet forces in Poland was concluded. And the Polish army, which had lost the trust of the people, began rebuilding itself as a Polish institution to regain its traditional respect and popularity as a profession. However, Gomulka's apparent victory in gaining grudging Soviet acquiescence to the "Polish road to socialism" had definite limitations. It did not extend to any weakening of the bonds to the Soviet Union. Poland remained a member of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet-Eastern European counterpart to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, also known as Comecon), and its foreign policy continued to bear Moscow's stamp. In fact, after his resumption of power in October 1956, Gomulka supported Soviet intervention in Hungary, even though Polish public opinion strongly supported the Hungarian "freedom fighters," a fact which Radio Warsaw admitted at one point. Twelve years later, Polish troops participated in the overthrow of Alexander Dubcek's regime in Czechoslovakia.

Many of the encouraging acts and policies which accompanied Gomulka's resumption of power were modified or reversed as time went on. Gomulka had earlier emphasized the bilateral aspects of relations between the members of the Warsaw Pact while Moscow stressed their multilateral dimension. Poland's

relations with Yugoslavia, for instance, were always somewhat closer than Moscow's. Yet gradually Poland fitted its relations within and outside the Communist world more and more into a Soviet mold. In spite of warnings from the Soviet Union, Gomulka had initially reached out to the West (the United States provided $52.9 million in Public Law 480 food assistance between 1957–63), but he subsequently took a hard public line toward the United States.

Internally the hopes for economic reform, such as decentralization of planning and production and a more prominent role for the Yugoslav-like workers' councils established in 1956, gradually diminished. Gomulka did successfully resist Soviet pressure to pursue the collectivization of agriculture. However, relations with the Church, which had recommenced on such a hopeful note in 1956 with the release of the primate, Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski, after three years' imprisonment, waxed and waned over the 14 years Gomulka was in power. The irresistible tendency of Polish intellectuals to speak out caused recurring difficulties for Gomulka during this period. The encouraging developments of 1956 never did blossom fully again.

The factionalism within the PZPR, which surfaced in the struggle preceding Gomulka's return, did not ease during this entire period. One group consisted of traditional Communists while the other tended to be Communist with a strong tinge of nationalism. Such an internal tug-of-war is not unusual, even in a totalitarian society, and it may in part account for Gomulka's seeming inconsistency in moving from one side of an issue to another, apparently in an effort to placate both factions.

From 1964 on, led by General Mieczyslaw Moczar, minister of interior, the "partisans," a group within the party which had remained in Poland during the war and espoused a kind of national but hardline communism, seemed to gain increasing strength within the party. Their influence on policy provoked student opposition—especially at Warsaw University—in 1968 and a wave of anti-Semitism which resulted in the expulsion or voluntary departure of many of the few remaining Jews in Poland. There is reason to believe that anti-Semitism was used as

a weapon in the internal party struggle. Because some Stalinist party leaders had been Jews, this group equated Jewishness with Stalinism. Communist and non-Communist alike, the Jewish community felt the effects. After 1968 Gomulka's fortunes went steadily downhill.

In 1956 Gomulka had been the people's choice, but his policies over 12 years had become increasingly repressive; living did not become much easier for the Polish population; and, although the Soviets did not have the ubiquitous role they had had earlier, the people tended to blame many of Gomulka's policies and actions on Soviet influence. And certainly the "Polish road to socialism" had never been completed.

Enter Gierek

Gomulka's last important act was the signing in 1970 of a treaty with the Federal Republic of Germany, which recognized the Polish postwar western border and opened up diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries. It was an historic moment when Willy Brandt, the West German chancellor, knelt before the monument erected to the heroes of the Warsaw uprising and, in effect, ended the state of war between Poland and Germany.

But it was not enough to save Gomulka. His downfall was precipitated by another outbreak of labor violence that year. Long-simmering public discontent over the shortages of basic foodstuffs and housing, dependence on the Soviet Union, and the lack of freedom exploded, as it was to do later, over the announcement of widespread price increases. Anti-regime feeling took its most violent form in Gdansk, where shipyard workers took to the streets and burned the party headquarters. The result was an estimated 70 workers killed by the internal security forces. Gomulka was deposed and replaced as first secretary by Edward Gierek, a member of the Politburo and the party chief in Silesia.

Not as popular as Gomulka when he resumed power, Gierek was nevertheless respected for what he, a former miner, had been able to achieve in improving conditions in Silesia. He had not

The monument in memory of the workers killed in Gdansk in the 1970 labor upheavals. Construction of the giant monument, surmounted by crosses and anchors, was one of the shipyard workers' demands for ending their strike in August 1980.

spent the war years in Poland, but neither had he spent them in the Soviet Union. He had worked as a miner in both France and Belgium and in fact had become a Communist in France.

He promised change, and to a certain extent he accomplished it—at least for a while. Essentially the new leader's policies consisted of four major elements: increases in real wages; better supplies of consumer goods; stable prices for basic necessities; and modernization, *i.e.* industrialization, of the economy. Foreign credits were available, imported goods helped to fill the gaps in Polish production, real wage increases and increased supplies of

consumer goods were incentives to increased productivity, agricultural production was rising, and the global economy was reasonably healthy. The psychological atmosphere caused by a change in the regime and the concessions to consumerism led to rising expectations and hope for the future. New goals obviously could not be realized immediately, but economic activity gradually increased. For the mass of the Polish people life did improve.

Plans and Promises

The global slowdown triggered by OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) price rises in 1973 hampered Poland's ability to increase exports, which was an essential element in its economic planning. But also, as events were to prove, the true economic reform which had been discussed ever since 1957 never took place. Despite the recognition even by some party leaders that the Soviet model was the wrong one for Poland, the overly centralized and overly managed organization of the economy never changed significantly. Year after year, it seemed, the unfulfilled promises of the "plan" had to be explained away or disregarded. Local directors and managers were expected to produce their planned targets but had no control over supplies of raw materials, components, tools, machinery or even labor. Since, by definition, a Communist state cannot have unemployment, nearly all large enterprises were burdened with surplus workers, which further hindered the mediocre productivity of the economy. Some plant managers who did not meet their production quotas arbitrarily raised the value on paper of each unit actually produced to make it look as if they had done so. This explains, for instance, some of the shortages.

Although supplies of consumer goods did rise, they still did not meet demand. As a result, an underground or "second" economy arose to meet in part the unsatisfied demand. Manufactures and raw materials were diverted from factories and sold—often for hard currency—outside the regular markets. Hard-currency stores soaked up other products. In the black market the currency was worth only one-fourth of its official value. Poles were

allowed—even encouraged—to open hard-currency bank accounts even though the means by which they procured such currency were often technically illegal. It was a standard joke among Poles that while the dollar was losing value in Western Europe, it was increasing in Poland.

To finance the modernization program, Poland turned to the West, incurring large debts to Western governments and banks. Many licensing agreements were made with Western firms—Grundig radios, International Harvester tractors, Fiat automobiles, and others. Other contracts were let for whole plants—RCA and Corning Glass collaborated on the construction of one of the most modern TV color-picture tube plants in the world, in part thanks to credits from the U.S. Export-Import Bank. Other loans were made for chemical, machinery, machine tool, motor vehicle, food processing, plastics, tobacco, soft drinks, tourist and other industries.

The assumption was that once completed many of these industries would be producing for export, which would earn the hard currency to repay the loans. However, several factors operated to nullify this hope:

▶ The recession in the West in 1974–75, following the Arab oil boycott, reduced the market for Polish goods.

▶ Polish production, although probably of higher quality than that of many Communist countries, often failed to meet Western standards.

▶ Polish reach exceeded its grasp: the timely completion of construction projects and the meeting of production quotas depended on greater efficiency than the Poles could achieve.

▶ The regime paid little attention to marketing skills and techniques but depended on its Western partners to provide them; obviously the partners were less interested in selling Polish products than their own.

▶ There was inadequate flexibility and incentive for the export industries.

▶ As the foreign debt grew, more emphasis was placed on new credits to pay interest and principal than on improved and more productive industry.

Although most experts recognized and acknowledged many of the above problems, the leadership did not have enough courage even to begin the necessary reforms. Moreover, the commitment to maintain stable prices required increasing subsidies which eventually consumed one-third of the budget. The availability of consumer goods gradually declined. Poles were spending more and more time in lines to purchase the most necessary staples, such as meat and butter, and this reduced even further the productivity of the economy. And as spending power increased so did demand, which could not be met.

Agricultural productivity did not increase. Partly this was due to adverse weather conditions in the years 1974–80. But earlier efforts to induce collectivization had made the peasants, traditionally suspicious of the state, even more wary than usual. At those times when the regime seemed to hold out incentives, the peasants tended to believe that this was a temporary palliative and not to be trusted. Furthermore, resources necessary for increased production—fertilizer, seed, spare parts—were diverted to the inefficient state agricultural sector. Therefore the private farmers had neither the incentives nor the means to increase production significantly. The emphasis on industrialization meant that many peasants switched to wage-earning jobs and produced only enough agricultural goods for their own needs.

Eventually the regime lost its ability to communicate with the people who, more and more, regarded everything the regime said with increasing skepticism and outright disbelief. The statements of the national leadership, dutifully repeated by the local officials, were so obviously in contradiction to life as the people knew it that the latter tended to disregard the statements entirely. The earlier promise of "dialogue" proved false, and local officials could not or would not communicate the real social and economic problems of the people to the leadership.

4

Solidarity

In part because of deteriorating conditions in Poland, in part because repression and a more closed society would adversely affect economic growth and the willingness of the West to provide resources for the modernization program, the regime reluctantly tolerated a significant growth of dissent in the 1970s. The power of the opposition became obvious in 1975 when the party introduced amendments to the Polish Constitution which would have institutionalized the predominant role of the party and the unbreakable ties with the Soviet Union. Resistance from the Church and nonparty political personalities forced the PZPR to back down and significantly amend the wording of the proposed amendments, even though the two concepts were retained in some form.

As the economy began to falter in 1975, the regime turned its attention once again to the internal, controlled price structure. Finally in June 1976, without warning or preparation, it decreed price increases of up to 60 percent for many items, including basic necessities. There were immediate outbreaks of violence in the city of Radom and at the large Ursus tractor plant in Warsaw. In other localities workers laid down their tools,

although they avoided violence. A jittery government rescinded the price measures within 24 hours, but the inability of the regime to come to grips with this basic question was a millstone around its neck from then on.

Many workers involved in the incident were arrested and tried for various crimes. A new dissident group, the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR), emerged to take up the fight for the release of the workers. Unofficial, its membership included intellectuals, former party officials and members who had become disillusioned with the system. Essentially it was a socialist group which, perhaps, could be equated with the "socialism with a human face" philosophy of the Dubcek group in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Organized for a specific purpose, KOR provided legal advice and political pressure which, within a year, were successful in freeing the workers arrested and tried in 1976. Thereafter it became a permanent, if infant, independent political group in Poland. Another group, ROPCiO (Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights), was formed in March 1977. It seemed to represent a more heterogeneous membership, including Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, liberals and even, it is said, monarchists. Despite their common hostility to the regime, the two groups never showed a great deal of affinity for collaborating.

Free Trade Unions

ROPCiO itself split when one of its leaders, Leszek Moczulski, formed in 1979 an avowedly political party, the Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN), which never gained any significant following or attention.

There were simultaneous efforts to form free trade unions, which were illegal, and to create a closer relationship between workers and intellectuals in groups like KOR, but to what extent they succeeded is difficult to assess. Jacek Kuron and Kazimierz Switon were known to be engaged in labor-organizing, but they had little to show for it aside from specific protests against some actions of the regime. Similarly, there was little evidence that

Lech Walesa, the future leader of Solidarity, was successful in forming a Baltic free trade union, at least in terms of a formal organization. Whereas the independent trade unions were clearly illegal, KOR and ROPCiO, although in fact political organizations, could be construed as informal groupings of like-minded intellectuals.

Whatever sympathy workers might have had for the efforts of the intellectuals, there was no conclusive evidence that the latter's attempts to bring the workers into their ranks were productive. It seemed as if close collaboration could be achieved when the workers had some specific grievance—such as in 1976—but the idea of an organized link was not in the cards. Traditionally in Poland workers and intellectuals have not had an easy relationship: the former have tended to be wary of the latter.

From Dissent to Demonstrations

Other developments pointing to the spread of dissent in Poland included the death of a young university student in Krakow under mysterious circumstances later attributed to police action. A spate of unofficial, uncensored publications appeared more or less regularly. One censor defected and published from Sweden the censorship regulations, which hitherto had been secret. They included a list of Western publications either proscribed in Poland or permitted entry only at times of international meetings. This information became known to the Polish population through radio broadcasts from the West by Radio Free Europe, the BBC and others. By 1980 significant demonstrations were taking place without interference by the authorities, including one on November 11, a pre-1939 holiday commemorating the World War I Armistice Day, and another in remembrance of those killed in Katyn.

There was also a considerable increase in personal contacts with the non-Communist world in the 1970s. Extensive cultural and scientific exchange programs with the United States, France, Germany, Britain and other countries exposed Polish scientists, intellectuals, educators and even average citizens to Western culture, media and prosperity. The regime followed a relatively

liberal policy in allowing many Poles to travel to Western Europe and the United States, though it was less obliging for those who wished to emigrate. There was reason to believe that the regime unofficially encouraged Poles to visit the United States, overstay their visitors' visas and work illegally. The overwhelming majority could be counted on to return to Poland with significant amounts of hard currency.

In 1978 a group of young intellectuals established a 20th-century version of the "flying universities" which, during the partition period, had been organized to teach, in Polish, a somewhat different version of Polish history, geography and economics than that provided in universities dominated by Prussia and Russia. In modern Poland the courses provided a non-Marxist insight into various subjects in the university curriculum. Held in churches and private homes, the courses became almost an alternate course of study and reached a large number of Polish university students. Occasionally harassed and physically beaten, the organizers and teachers nevertheless persevered, although sporadic regime pressure on those providing meeting places often reduced attendance or caused cancellations.

Fueling the Fire

The growth of dissent coincided with a series of developments which led to the climactic summer of 1980. Among the most significant of these developments, three concerned the state of the economy:

1. Despite the initial economic successes of the modernization program, the Gierek regime was not able to meet its industrialization and export goals, and in 1979 recorded a net reduction in gross national product (GNP). Productivity was down and state services such as transportation were increasingly inefficient.

2. To finance the modernization program Poland had built up an increasingly unbearable foreign debt to the West: at the beginning of 1980 it amounted to $20 billion and is now estimated at $27 billion. It sought additional loans just to repay capital and interest from previous loans.

3. The combination of domestic problems and an unsuccessful agricultural policy led to the importation of increasing amounts of agricultural products, mostly feed grains for the livestock herds.

Among the key political developments:

1. The weak government was unable to make economic decisions, *e.g.* to raise prices, which might cause popular discontent.

2. There was factional strife within the party between the traditional Communists and those who supported economic decentralization, political liberalization and somewhat looser ties with the Soviet Union.

3. A labor force which was dissatisfied with the scarcity of basic necessities, including food and housing, again became aware of its power.

4. Dissidents of varying philosophies operated more or less openly, publishing up to 30 unofficial periodicals, and were able to get their message to the Polish people and the outside world.

5. The Catholic Church was headed by a Polish Pope and was led in Poland by an implacable and wily Cardinal with a strong sense of history and a sure feel for how far the regime could be pushed.

6. The people, who had never fully adapted to close ties to an historically hostile neighbor or to the Communist system, became increasingly impatient for greater material and spiritual sustenance, and were more and more critical of the perquisites of party functionaries.

The Drama Builds

By the beginning of 1980 time was running out for Poland to cope successfully with its massive foreign hard-currency debt. There were increasing rumors that true economic reform might be started with the PZPR party congress in February, to be followed by parliamentary elections—Communist-style—in March. Though the population grumbled a lot, it was still too apathetic to represent a real threat to the regime.

The hopes for the party congress proved to be illusory, even

Politburo member Stefan Olszowski

though it did result in the dismissal of the unpopular prime minister, Piotr Jaroszewicz, who was considered Moscow's man in the Politburo. Politburo member Stefan Olszowski, former foreign minister, was exiled to East Germany as ambassador, only to return to the Politburo six months later. Although Olszowski is a political conservative, he was viewed as sympathetic to economic reform. His demotion seemed to confirm that there would be no significant economic changes despite the increasingly perceived vital necessity for them.

The first six months of 1980, despite some personnel changes in the top leadership, seemed no different from the preceding months. The only promising development was the gradual attainment of a favorable balance of trade, the first in 15 years. Whether this represented statistical manipulation or a herculean effort to reduce imports and increase exports to impress Western bankers, who were being asked for further credits, was unclear.

The events of the next six months interrupted the process, thus precluding adequate analysis.

The 21 Demands

The events of 1980–81 were again set off by the announcement of price increases, this time for certain cuts of meat. The results were sit-in, nonviolent strikes for increased wages, improved working conditions and other economic demands which the regime almost immediately was willing to negotiate. However, when the shipyard workers in Gdansk struck six weeks later, they added unprecedented political demands. The 21 demands included the right to strike, the right to organize independent trade unions, the end of censorship, access to the media for the Church and the release of political prisoners.

While the Gdansk negotiations between Walesa and Deputy Prime Minister and Politburo member Mieczstaw Jagielski were still under way, many, perhaps most, of the restrictions on the media were removed. Journalists, who were not allowed even to report the earlier strikes, now reported in detail, including human interest stories based on interviews with strikers, managers, private citizens and their own observations. The negotiations were broadcast to the striking workers and were later rebroadcast on the radio in the area. State television filmed the strikers and their activities, including the taking of confessions by local priests in the shipyards.

The regime conceded nearly all demands. The Gdansk agreement, signed August 31, 1980, resulted in the departure of First Secretary Gierek for reasons of "ill health" and his replacement by Stanislaw Kania in September 1980. A member of the Politburo, Kania had come up through the party ranks and was known to have oversight of internal security, defense and Church-state relations.

Ever since the agreement was signed, the process of liberalization and democratization has continued to unfold. In addition to the trade union organization Solidarity, other independent groups have been established—most important, perhaps, the peasants in Rural Solidarity and the students in an independent,

THE DEMANDS OF

Demands of the striking work-teams at workplaces and businesses represented by the Inter-Factory Strike Committee:

The Inter-Factory Strike Committee represents both work-teams and institutions whose functioning is socially indispensable. This committee's goal is the carrying-on of negotiations to fulfill the expectations of the striking work-teams.

One of the first conditions of beginning negotiations is the unblocking of all telephones.

The demands of the striking work-teams represented by the Inter-Factory Strike Committee are as follows:

1. Acceptance of free trade unions independent of the party and employers in accordance with Convention No. 87 of the International Labor Organization, ratified by the Polish People's Republic, concerning the freedom of unions.

2. Guarantee of the right to strike and of the security of the strikers and persons aiding them.

3. Compliance with the guarantee in the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic of freedom of speech, the press, and publication, and likewise the nonrepression of independent publishers, and the making available of the mass media to representatives of all faiths.

4. (a) A returning of their former rights to: people dismissed from work after the 1970 and 1976 strikes; students expelled from school for their convictions.

(b) The freeing of all political prisoners (among them, Edmund Zadrozynski, Jan Kozlowski, and Marek Kozlowski).

(c) An end to repression for one's convictions.

5. Making information available in the mass media about the formation of the Inter-Factory Strike Committee, and the publication of its demands.

6. The undertaking of actions aimed at bringing the country out of its crisis situation by the following means:

(a) The making public of complete information about the social-economic situation.

(b) Enabling all milieus and social classes to take part in discussions of the reform program.

7. All workers taking part in the strike are to be compensated for the period of the strike with rest leave paid for by the fund of the Central Council of Unions.

THE POLISH WORKERS

8. The base pay of each worker is to be raised by 2,000 *zlotys*/month as compensation for the recent rise in prices.

9. Automatic increase in pay is to be guaranteed, concomitant with the increase in prices and the fall in real income.

10. The internal market is to be fully supplied with food products, and only surpluses are to be exported.

11. "Commercial" prices are to be lowered, as is sale for hard currency in the so-called internal export.

12. The principle of the selection of management personnel on the basis of qualifications and not of party membership is to be introduced. Privileges of the SB (secret police), MO (regular police), and party apparatus are to be eliminated by equalizing family subsidies, abolishing special stores, etc.

13. Food coupons are to be introduced for meat and meat products (during the period of getting the market situation under control).

14. Retirement age for women is to be reduced to 50, and for men to 55, or 30 years' employment in the Polish People's Republic for women and 35 years for men, regardless of age.

15. Old-age pensions and annuities are to be brought into line with what has actually been paid in.

16. The working conditions of the health service are to be improved to insure full medical care for workers.

17. A reasonable number of places in day-care centers and kindergartens is to be assured for the children of working mothers.

18. Paid maternity leave for three years is to be introduced for the purpose of child-raising.

19. The period of waiting for apartments is to be shortened.

20. The commuter's allowance is to be raised from 40 to 100 zlotys, with a supplemental benefit for separation.

21. All Saturdays are to be nonworkdays. Workers in the four-brigade system or round-the-clock jobs are to be compensated for the loss of free Saturdays with increased leave or with other paid time off work.

Inter-Factory Strike Committee
Gdansk, August 22, 1980

Free Printshop of the Gdynia Shipyards
(Printing Gratis)
(Translated by the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw.)

nonsocialist organization. The party has reeled before this onslaught. In recurring confrontations, Solidarity, which anticipated government actions to roll back gains already won, forced the authorities to back down. The strike as a threat became as effective as the strike itself. The party made concession after concession, changing its leadership at almost every level, tolerating strikes and demonstrations, and generally appeared unable to govern as it once did. The culmination of this process, in a sense, was the democratization of party procedures with multicandidate secret balloting for party congress delegates and secret votes in various party organs.

As the weakness of the regime, obvious only to a relatively few observers earlier, became apparent to all, both Poles and Westerners expressed concern about the ability of the party to hold together and play the role assigned to it in the Constitution—a role now seriously threatened. Paradoxically, staunchly anti-Communist but realistic observers feared the disintegration of the party, which could be the pretext for Soviet intervention similar to that in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

5

Church, Farm and Freedom

The events in Poland in 1980 and 1981 have electrified the world and perhaps prepared the way for change in a region which, since 1945, has been largely dominated by a single state, the Soviet Union.

Since 1945 much has been said and written about the liberation of Eastern Europe. In Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, it appeared as if that might come to pass. However those efforts, both of which represented liberalization from above, i.e., from within the party itself, were snuffed out by Soviet military intervention. In the case of Poland, however, the movement came from outside the party, in part from the mass of workers who are supposed to be the basic building block of communism.

Why have these developments occurred in Poland? And why does Poland appear to have a greater chance of liberating itself than did Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968?

One could cite a multitude of factors which contributed to the events of 1980–81 in Poland: ethnic homogeneity (98 percent of the population is Polish) for the first time in modern history; the militancy and organizing skills of the Polish workers and the

The monument commemorating antigovernment protests and strikes, 1956 to 1980

precedents of the actions in 1956, 1970 and 1976; the strong sense of history among Poles; Polish attachment to Western as opposed to Slavic civilization; and the Polish feeling of superiority to the Russians. All of those considerations are important, as the study of Polish history, particularly the events of the past 35 years, indicates. In addition, there are three major factors which emerged in the postwar period which differentiate Poland from its neighbors.

The Church

The birth of Poland dates from the conversion and baptism of a Polish king. Historically, therefore, the Church and the nation are closely intertwined. This relationship, however, has not always been constant. The Reformation did have some effect in Poland; other religious groups—Orthodox, Jewish, Uniate, Lutheran—existed and still do to a certain extent. Although for much of Polish history the Church has been the rallying point for the Polish nation, at various times it played a lesser role. Between 1918 and 1939, for example, it was not the dominant force it had been during the partitions or would become after 1945.

From the partition period to the present, the Church has come to be regarded as the ultimate guardian of the spirit and values of the Polish nation because there was no other institution which elicited almost unanimous respect. It has been the unifying force to which most—if not all—Poles can look as the guarantor of the nation and the object of their loyalty. Since Poland was truly independent for only 21 years in the period 1795–1945, it is understandable that the Church sought to play a unifying role. It is also understandable that, especially during the partition period, the Church assumed a nationalistic stance to forestall Prussian and Russian efforts to strengthen Lutheran and Orthodox influence in Poland.

The Church played an important role in the Polish resistance during the Nazi occupation. It gave shelter to members of the resistance; independent members of the clergy often provided baptismal certificates to Jews; and, in some areas, priests actually participated directly in the Polish resistance. Many were placed in German concentration camps and killed. The primate, August Cardinal Hlond, refused to act as regent in German-occupied Poland and was eventually interned by the Nazis.

It was wholly in keeping with the past that the Polish people—their country at first occupied by one traditional adversary, Germany, and "liberated" by another, the Soviet Union, and then subjected to a regime which was dominated by Moscow and an unpopular ideology—should turn again to the Church for spiritual and moral sustenance after 1945.

Although the new Communist regime recognized that it could not simply repress or overly restrict the Church's activities without precipitating popular unrest, it did try to circumscribe its power and influence. The Church was given no legal standing in postwar Poland; it lost most of its real property; there was almost constant friction over the Church's right to provide religious instruction; the state was granted a voice in the naming of bishops and cardinals; building permits and construction materials for new churches were only rarely granted; and Church officials were occasionally harassed. The most overt move against the Church occurred in the Stalinist period when the primate, Cardinal Wyszynski, was imprisoned (1953–56) and other clerics were arrested and jailed.

Later the party realized—and privately admitted—that these actions only increased the Church's authority and influence among the people. Gomulka, when he returned to power in 1956, released the primate, probably with the unstated understanding that the Church would be free to operate as long as it did not directly challenge the regime. However, relations between the Church and the party had constant ups and downs during the remainder of Gomulka's tenure as first secretary. The Polish Episcopate did not hesitate to have critical letters read from all the church pulpits when circumstances warranted.

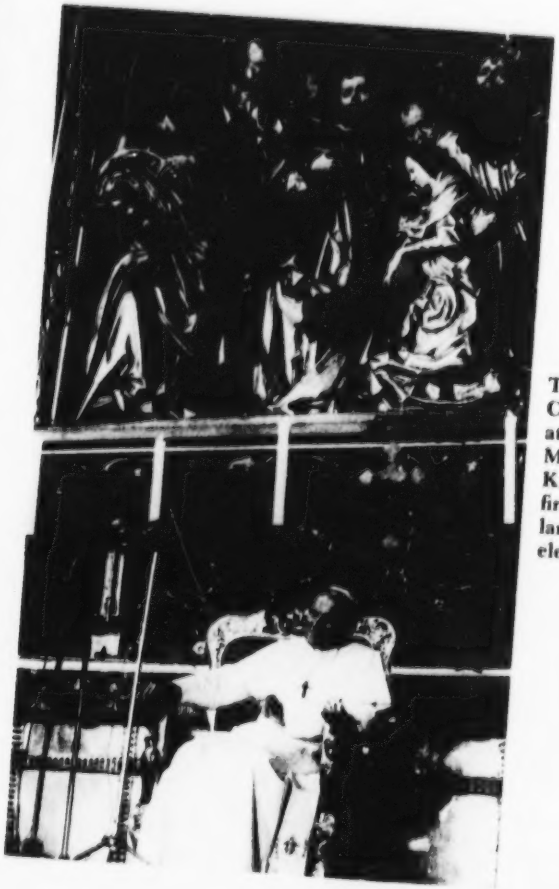
Early in the Communist era the party supported the establishment of a Catholic secular group, Pax, under the leadership of Boleslaw Piasecki, whom in the past many had considered a fascist. Realizing the attraction of the Church, the party hoped that this group would gain popular support for a policy opposed to Church intervention in politics. And the state, using some sympathetic priests, took over the Catholic charitable organization, Caritas. Periodically the primate reminded the faithful that Caritas was a state organ and that the priests who associated with it did so without the Church's endorsement.

Still, the Polish army was the only one in Eastern Europe with chaplains—a remarkable exception even if the chaplains were not always allowed to operate as freely as the Church would have liked. Similarly a Catholic lay group, Znak (Sign), was permitted

to organize and publish a weekly newspaper and even to be represented in the parliament. The Catholic Intellectual Clubs (KIK) were not only centers of political dissent but they also organized courses for parishioners on secular subjects, albeit in conformity with Church doctrine. It was largely the leaders of KIK who provided the technical assistance to Solidarity when it negotiated with the government. If the Polish Communist leadership did not realize it initially, they eventually came to understand that the Church was a power to be reckoned with and treated with respect. The argument is made—perhaps with some validity—that the Church derived its strength in part from the unpopularity of Communist rule: as the only feasible alternate source of power, the Church became even more important to the Polish people than the latter's religious beliefs might have warranted. There are also those who argue that the Polish Church's opposition to Communist ideology reinforced the Church's relative conservatism and traditional theology. The Church was fortunate to have as primate from 1948 until his death in 1981 Cardinal Wyszynski, who with strength and determination, tempered by realism and understanding of the possible, was able not only to lead the Church but also to affect the course of internal Polish politics.

Under his leadership, the Church played its role with circumspection and prudence. It had something to offer the regime: it was listened to by the people and could be a powerful factor either for social peace or for unrest. The Church wanted both stability and internal liberalization. It did not want the situation in Poland to deteriorate to the point that Moscow would intervene, but at the same time it maintained pressure on the party to move in the direction of a more open political and social system.

The reaction to the election in 1978 of a Polish Pope and his visit to Poland in 1979 demonstrated more forcefully than ever the power of the Church in Poland. Even Polish Communists were proud of the election of a Polish Pope. Perhaps the most striking impression of Pope John Paul II's visit to his homeland, which I witnessed, was the supporting fervor of Polish youth. To



The former Karol Cardinal Wojtyla at the altar of St. Mary's Church in Krakow on his first visit to Poland after being elected Pope

paraphrase one party official's comments to his colleagues—there go 30 years of indoctrination down the drain.

The Polish Church had not always been on the best of terms with the Vatican, partly because of its propensity for placing national concerns above those of the universal Church. There

was significant distrust of Pope Pius XII (1939–61), who was viewed as too ready to compromise with Nazi Germany. And the Polish hierarchy appears to have resisted Vatican efforts in the past ten years to negotiate directly with the Communist regime and possibly install a Vatican representative in Warsaw. The Polish Church was adamant in its resistance to the party and wished to control Church-party relations to the same degree it had in the early postwar years. Pope John Paul II supported that policy when he was cardinal in Krakow.

Independent Farmers

All the Communist states of Eastern Europe have collectivized agriculture except Poland. Not that the PZPR has discarded this cardinal point of Communist doctrine; indeed it has adopted various policies aimed at collectivization. However, just as the Church, supported by the people, effectively opposed efforts to reduce its power and influence, so Polish peasants stoutly resisted efforts to curb their independence.

The postwar regime did collectivize much of the land left by the Germans who were repatriated from what is now western Poland, and it is there that most of the state farms are located. It also encouraged the formation of cooperative farms—the pooling of land by several farmers—into larger and more efficient units. However, success was limited. Despite the fact that state and cooperative farms were consistently given priority in procurement of machinery and spare parts, fertilizers, insecticides and seeds, the proportion of agricultural production from such farms did not noticeably increase in proportion to private farm production.

As time went on, the regime increased the incentives offered private farmers to turn over or sell their land to the state. Yet even the introduction of farmer pensions, payable when their land was given to the state or passed on to their heirs, did not result in large transfers. It was estimated in 1980 that over 75 percent of Polish agricultural land was still in the hands of private individuals, the remainder in state or cooperative farms.

Nobel-prize writer Czeslaw Milosz was lionized during his 1981 visit to Poland, the first since he defected in 1951.

More important, the tradition of the independent farmer, suspicious of the state and its policies, survived intact in Poland. The farmer's potential for disrupting the system was manifested on occasion by peasant strikes. Farmers would refuse to deliver produce unless the price paid by the state was increased. Efficient private farmers with larger holdings could earn a great deal of money because they could sell a certain amount of their produce privately at higher prices than those paid by the state.

Freedom of Expression

Even during the worst periods of Communist rule, Poland tolerated more internal liberty than its allies in the Warsaw Pact. This was partly due to the traditionally vigorous tendency of Poles, nurtured by the experience of many years of partition and occupation, to speak their minds. Poland, except during the Stalinist period at the end of which a reported 100,000 political prisoners were released, did not seem to convict many people of political offenses. Even before the return of Gomulka in 1956—

which coincided with a wave of liberalization—Polish intellectuals were becoming more daring in what they published, even in official—meaning censored—publications. Disputes within the party—and there have been many—quickly became known by word of mouth in Warsaw and elsewhere. Mail passed relatively freely between Poles and the millions of their relatives and friends living outside Poland.

The arts provided another means of expression for the Poles. Films and political cabarets were used to express—in subtle fashion, depending on the situation—political opinion. Even official criticism of Czeslaw Milosz, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980, was muted despite the fact that, as a Polish diplomat, he had defected in 1951. His literary skills were respected even though his political beliefs were anathema and most of his writings were read in Poland only in periodicals smuggled in from the West.

Perhaps another manifestation of a distinctively Polish attitude was how Poland treated its fallen leaders. After his ouster in 1970, Gomulka lived quietly outside Warsaw. On his 75th birthday in 1980 he was sent a special message by the party. Cyrankiewicz, though replaced as prime minister, was given an honorary position, as were many other ex-leaders. The brutality of other Communist regimes did not exist in Poland.

There was always a basic liberality under the surface, which probably encouraged the occasional outbursts of opposition which have occurred all during the 35 years of Communist Poland.

6

Poland Between East and West

The Western world watched events in Poland with a mixture of anxiety and exhilaration. The prospect of at least some Western-style democratic liberties and principles being accepted in Poland was welcomed throughout the Western world. But the possibility of Soviet intervention and invasion, following earlier precedents, was not.

Western interests are political, economic and ideological. To take the last first, the prospect of significant, *peaceful* change in a democratic direction would be a powerful source of encouragement to those who have despaired of breaking the Communist grip except by force. It is unimportant that, in the last analysis, the success of the Polish movement depends on the forbearance and tolerance of the Soviet Union. In fact, it tends to prove that the Soviet hold over countries like Poland is dependent on force.

Economically, the West has an interest in the growing interdependence of the Communist world and the Western economy. To the extent that the East becomes dependent on the West, it restricts the former's ability to act unilaterally and without regard for the interests of others. At the same time the

West, and private banks in particular, have invested so much in Poland that they have become prisoners of the Polish economy. German, French, British and American banks have a very real stake in Poland. Western Europe's trade with the East, however, represents a much larger proportion of its total foreign trade than America's trade with the East represents in terms of total U.S. trade. For that reason the United States and its allies tend to see things somewhat differently.

Politically the United States and Western Europe have tried to handle their relations with the individual Warsaw Pact countries separately from relations with the Soviet Union. They know this is not entirely possible, but they have been reasonably successful as long as the Polish leadership felt free enough from Soviet control to negotiate—politically or economically—with the West. Poland has become a major importer of U.S. agricultural products and is likely to remain one for years to come. In the 1970s Poland received over $2 billion in U.S. Commodity Credit Corporation credits and guarantees for agricultural goods, making it the single largest recipient of CCC credits. It has also benefited from U.S. Export-Import Bank credits. The trade with the United States is important both to Poland, particularly to maintain and increase its livestock herds, and to American farmers.

Knowing that its direct influence on Polish developments was minimal, the West reacted to the events of the summer of 1980 with prudence and restraint in an effort to give Moscow no external reasons for intervention. Essentially the West stressed that this was an internal Polish matter to be settled and resolved by Poles. The United States and its Western allies could have loudly welcomed Solidarity's triumphs and the party's concessions, but this might have incited the Soviet Union and the Polish party to charge outside intervention. On the other hand, the West believed it could not remain silent, which might have been perceived in Moscow as a signal that the West was indifferent to possible Soviet intervention. It was evident that the West wished to avoid charges that it had instigated the strikes or clandestinely intervened to support the strikers, but it also wished to warn the

Soviet Union that intervention would seriously affect Soviet relations with the West. The United States had a particular consideration, an active and articulate Polish-American community, which complained initially that the U.S. government was too timid in its public reaction to events in Poland. However, Western trade union movements, including the AFL-CIO, did openly provide moral and material support. Although denounced in Moscow and elsewhere, that help did not furnish a pretext for intervention as official assistance might have.

At different times over the following months, Soviet troop movements and prolonged maneuvers of Soviet, East German, Czech and Polish forces, as well as periodic outbursts by Communist countries charging the West with "antisocialist" and "imperialist" activities, did impel the Western powers to issue public and private warnings against Soviet intervention in Poland. Several meetings between Soviet and Polish party leaders were seen as crisis points, although they usually ended with a restatement of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact's conviction that the Polish party could resolve its problems.

Soviet Restraint

The Soviet Union, which did not initially inform its citizens of the magnitude of the Polish events, also showed restraint. Critical Communist comments about Poland largely emanated from East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Soviet leaders undoubtedly believed that immediate and forceful action was not as yet necessary since Poland, unlike Hungary and Czechoslovakia, was completely surrounded by other Communist powers. Therefore, especially in view of other constraints on Soviet action, they could await developments in the full realization that they had the necessary geographic advantage to impose their will on the Polish authorities if necessary. In retrospect some Eastern European commentators now feel that this prolonged hesitation made Soviet intervention more and more unlikely.

The appointment of General Wojciech Jaruzelski, minister of national defense and Politburo member, as prime minister in 1981 was seen as the PZPR's way of reassuring Moscow of its

First Secretary Kania and Prime Minister Jaruzelski at the party congress in June 1981

determination and ability to control events, this despite the fact that Jaruzelski was known to have stated on two or three occasions that "Polish soldiers will not fire on Polish workers."

The Soviet Union, however, must have seen the evolution of the internal structure of the Polish state and society as inimical to its ideological beliefs. Independent trade unions and a pluralistic society are contrary to Soviet doctrine. The potential reorganization of the Polish economy with decisions no longer wholly under party control was contrary to Soviet dogma as well. The fact that the military, initially in the person of General Jaruzelski, was associated with these changes was an additional source of concern. But regardless of evident Soviet discomfort, there was no Soviet intervention. Why?

Undoubtedly Soviet policy has been influenced by considerations having nothing to do with Poland. Approximately one-third of the Soviet defense force is tied down on the Chinese border. In addition, the Soviet commitment in Afghanistan has not lessened, despite concerns about Poland. And it is clear that,

up till now, the U.S.S.R. has not wished to endanger its relationship with Western Europe. If at all possible, it wants to keep open the dialogue and commercial links with Western Europe—especially if they serve to divide the U.S. and NATO.

Purely Polish considerations, however, also play a role. It is generally agreed that Soviet military intervention in Poland would not only cause a serious deterioration in the Soviet Union's relationship with Western Europe but would also meet serious, prolonged and bloody resistance from the Poles. Whether the Polish army as a whole would fight is not known, but certainly individual units would resist. It has been estimated that up to 1 million troops would be required for military intervention, and, assuming as we must that the Soviet Union would be able to prevail, regardless of bloodshed, a half million would be required for an occupation of indefinite duration.

Soviet occupation forces would be confronted by a traditionally hostile population even more unproductive than it has been. In addition, the U.S.S.R. would be responsible for a country with a weak economy and would, indirectly at least, assume the responsibility for the massive debt to the West. Soviet leaders, known for their determination to maintain fiscal responsibility for their external finances, would be reluctant to take over Polish debts. And the Soviet statement on August 23, 1981, warning its Eastern-bloc allies to remain faithful to Soviet-style communism and avoid "excessive debt" to the West, tended to reinforce speculation that Poland's economic plight had been an important deterrent to Soviet intervention.

Though the costs of intervention would be high, no one believes that Moscow would hesitate to intervene, regardless of the costs, if it considered its own security endangered. Clearly, Soviet conviction that the Polish party had lost control or that Soviet lines of communication or transport to its troops in East Germany were endangered would bring about Soviet intervention. It is my own opinion that cumulative developments in Poland or a single event—such as a Polish decision inimical to the strength of the Warsaw Pact or Comecon cooperation—could trigger the Kremlin's decision to intervene.

The Soviet Union, despite obvious forebodings, has permitted the Polish experiment to proceed. Presumably the reasons cited earlier played a role in this decision. But the steadily weakening position of the conservative wing of the PZPR and firm army support for First Secretary Kania and Prime Minister Jaruzelski have also given the Soviets pause. Though the Kremlin permitted the party congress to convene as scheduled, the letter of June 5, 1981 from the Soviet Central Committee to the Polish Central Committee, underscoring the possibility of ultimate intervention, had a sobering effect on the proceedings.

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7

1981 and Beyond: A Personal Epilogue

Poland has retained its political system based on the "leading role" of the PZPR. It has not taken any steps to revert to private industry. And it has pledged anew—without any significant domestic opposition, apparently—its loyalty to the Warsaw Pact and other Eastern European organizations. Despite all that, the changes in Poland in the past year have been profound.

Since July 1980 one can follow two parallel but interrelated processes at work in Polish affairs: political developments outside the party and change inside the party.

Outside the party, the initial success of Solidarity has unleashed an almost chaotic burst of pent-up frustration generated by the nature of the regime and the way the Communist system functions. New organizations have sprung up. There have been strikes and strike threats, demonstrations, surprisingly outspoken public debate, and other manifestations of the Polish "renewal." Both the United Peasant party and the Democratic party have reorganized, with the former beginning to assume the traditional attitudes of a Polish peasant party. Pax, the Communist-supported Catholic lay organization, has also been reorganized with new leadership. Coincidentally, the rock of the

Polish Catholic Church, Cardinal Wyszynski, died and has been replaced by someone whose leadership qualities as primate are still relatively unknown. However, in his first public sermon to the pilgrims gathered at the Shrine of the Black Virgin in Czestochowa, Archbishop Jozef Glemp followed the example of his predecessor in simultaneously stressing support for the Polish renewal and the dangers of going too far.

Solidarity has emerged as a major political, social and economic mass organization with which the Polish government and the PZPR must come to terms in some form. It is troubled by its own internal divisions, which is hardly surprising in an organization so recently formed and led by men with little organizational experience. Lech Walesa, the new star of Polish politics, faces opposition from more militant members of the leadership who wish to go further in renewal—almost to revolution and the ousting of the party itself. His task—assuring that renewal does not go so far and so fast that the organization of society breaks down completely or invites Soviet intervention—is a formidable one.

Even if Solidarity has fewer than the 10 million members it claims, the difficulty of controlling, guiding or leading the multitude of Solidarity locals would still be great. Each local has its own grievances, and each operates in an atmosphere different from the rest. More than once strike and protest actions against local authorities have threatened the country's very equilibrium.

Rural Solidarity, which presented a greater organizing challenge than its urban counterpart, has been less active, possibly because of the demands of the 1981 growing season. Once the crops are harvested, however, one can expect renewed activity.

One of the interesting post-Gdansk developments is the eclipse if not the disappearance of the dissident organizations, KOR, ROPCiO, and KPN. The growth in assertiveness and leadership of Solidarity and other organizations, the democratization of Polish politics, and the new openness of Polish society have removed much of the reason for their existence. When there was a single institution, the PZPR, that symbolized all that was

A photographer with the Polish government's press agency recorded the meeting of Lech Walesa and Pope John Paul II at the Vatican on Jan. 15, 1981.

wrong, it was easier to mobilize the opposition. Those who constitute the present leadership are not monolithic in philosophical or ideological terms, and they now seem to be pursuing their own individual interests.

The Church's role and influence, always important in Poland, have been particularly valuable since 1980. The Church has counseled, advised, interpreted, mediated and, in general, become perhaps the single most important factor bridging the gaps between the various interests in the country. There is no reason to believe its role will become any less important as the whole nation seeks to make renewal work. However, the Church is no longer the *only* alternate center of power; it is no longer the only institution to which average citizens can turn for moral and spiritual sustenance. Now they have other possibilities, and some of these provide an outlet for direct action which the Church does not. Still essential, the Church will undoubtedly be reconsidering and rethinking its own future role should the new, pluralistic Polish experiment succeed.

Other independent, nonparty organizations will also have

their role to play, perhaps initially limited to their own particular interests—whether they are formed by students, scientists, professors, youths or others. But they will be courted by conflicting centers of power for support.

Party and Government under Siege

As an organization, the party—and therefore the government—has suffered the biggest change. The two may no longer be synonymous but in many ways they still overlap. The changes in the leadership are striking. In one year, Poland has had four prime ministers, and nearly all the ministerial and numerous lesser posts have changed hands. Within the party there has been a massive turnover in membership in the party congress, the Central Committee, the Politburo, and other organs. Almost all the provincial party secretaries and governors have been replaced, a process which goes down to the lowest administrative level.

The democratization of party procedures started even before the party congress met in July 1981. At meetings of the Central Committee in the months before the congress, decisions were made by secret vote—a major departure from past practice. At the party congress, party leaders, newly aware of and sensitive to the views of not only party members but the public as well, vied and maneuvered for votes in a relatively open way. The importance of this development cannot be overemphasized because, in my own opinion, the loss of communication by the pre-1980 leadership was a major factor in its failure and ouster.

The PZPR, which has been hard put to maintain its leadership role with Solidarity dominating and forcing the pace of change, will now have to reassert itself even though the democratic procedures it has adopted will make it more difficult, if not impossible, to achieve the unanimity or near-unanimity to which it is accustomed. There are still liberal and conservative wings which will dispute with each other for control and disagree on policy and its implementation. It is true that the "horizontal" movement, a kind of "people's" takeover of the party organiza-

tion at the local level, which threatened to become a party within the party, is quiescent—in part perhaps because the U.S.S.R. had seen it as an intolerable development. But if the circumstances which gave rise to it again prevail, it could revive and start a genuine revolt from below. There is little question that the PZPR, as important as it remains, is not the determining force it once was.

The Polish Army

Equally interesting is the question of the role of the army. As the third most respected institution in Poland—even though the overwhelming majority of its officers are party members—it has also played an important role in the events of the past year. Based on the votes he received for election to the Central Committee, Prime Minister and Defense Minister Jaruzelski is the most popular party leader, and he has appointed more generals to ministerial posts. One of the most significant statements which came out of the Central Committee's July 1981 meeting, which discussed the threatening Soviet letter of June 5, 1981, was that the uniformed comrades (army officers) completely supported the Polish party's reply. That news was probably not completely welcome in Moscow. The implication is that if the Soviets push too hard, they can expect the Polish army to resist.

The army is anxious to prevent another situation from developing which would require a decision as to whether to use force to maintain or restore order. It wishes to have no role in physically repressing fellow Poles, in part because it is a conscript army, filled with nonparty enlisted men who would be more likely to remain loyal to their family and other ties than to what is to them an alien philosophy. The army has thus become an arbiter of Polish politics—not an entirely unprecedented role for the Polish military.

Economic Shocks

The events of the last year have cost the crisis-ridden Polish economy dearly and underscore the area in which the Polish leadership—both in and out of the party—will have to concen-

Empty food stalls at the Warsaw market

trate its efforts. Polish production has further decreased, wages and other benefits have risen, availability of even the most necessary consumer goods has fallen, and Poland still faces its $27 billion debt to the West.

The prime minister's announcement in July 1981, at the closing of the party congress, that the government intended to raise prices, in some cases by over 100 percent, caused concern but did not elicit strong protests. Although Solidarity had not endorsed price increases, it did not react adversely as Polish labor has in the past. It is generally conceded that a thorough change in the price structure is needed, not only because prices have been artificially depressed at the cost of large government subsidies, but also because it is necessary to relieve the pressure of excess buying power, part of which even predates the strikes of 1980.

Prices had not yet been increased by late summer 1981, but a 20 percent reduction in the meat ration was announced in July. This, and the pervasive necessity to wait in long lines to buy, triggered demonstrations which, however, were directed at short-

ages and maldistribution of food supplies, not prices, and which were not led by the national Solidarity organization; these were local manifestations. Yet national Solidarity, to maintain its own credibility of leadership, often felt constrained to support such demonstrations, as was the case in Warsaw in early August.

Help for Farmers

One economic change promised by the government has been implemented to a certain extent. Private farmers have been given some priority in acquiring fertilizers and other resources and have received increased price incentives to raise production. Halfway through the growing season it appeared that the harvest would be significantly better than in the past few years. The most glaring deficiency has been a decrease in the livestock herds, which are not easily or quickly restored.

Whatever the success of the harvest, no overall plan—which all parties seem to agree is necessary—has yet been promulgated by the economic reformers. In part this is tied to the rescheduling of the Polish debt and the receipt of further credits to import food, raw materials, spare parts and some consumer goods to enable the economy to rebound.

Although Western governments have agreed to postpone debt repayments for five years, private Western banks, which hold the bulk of the hard-currency credits, have yet to negotiate a long-term agreement with Poland. However, they have agreed to short-term roll-overs.

The bankers will assuredly impose certain conditions regarding Polish financial and economic performance which will, in turn, have to become an element in any economic reform. Were Poland to join the International Monetary Fund (IMF), such conditions would presumably be negotiated directly with the IMF, which in turn could furnish some credits itself. However, Soviet objections have, up to now, prevented such a move. The tension and bargaining which have characterized the past year have prevented the elaboration of the economic reform, which inevitably will require austerity and sacrifice on the part of the Polish people and a maximum production effort in the economy.

Needed: National Consensus

It has been my view that this short-term future (three to five years) will depend on the achievement of a national consensus which will have to be based on the tripod of the party, the Church and Solidarity. If that degree of cooperation can be negotiated, the results could be threefold: Poland would have a real possibility of solving its short- and medium-term economic problems; economic progress and social stability would decrease the threat of future Soviet intervention; and the success of the Polish experiment would be an evident example elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

It will not be easy to reach such a consensus or to succeed if it is achieved. The pluralization and liberalization of Polish society have created a sense of participation and social action which, if exaggerated, could produce further instability and unrest. Discipline, patience and stamina will be required of everyone, as well as an understanding that no quick or significant improvement in the standard of living is possible.

In the meantime Solidarity will continue to be beset by its own internal contradictions. As this is written, Walesa seems to be advocating a more moderate but watchful course of cooperation rather than confrontation. The party conservatives, licking their wounds, will seek to reestablish their strength and primacy, probably helped by the Soviets and other Communist states. The Soviet Union itself may find the factors which have dissuaded it from intervention until now to be less persuasive in the future.

The West will need to be forthcoming but will be vulnerable to the charge of assisting a system which is still inefficient and with which it does not agree. In the absence of a constructive Western policy it is anticipated by many that the Polish economy will collapse and bring about greater Soviet control. Recent statements from Moscow indicate that economic constraints may have determined the decision not to intervene. At the same time Moscow is warning other Warsaw Pact members against too-extensive future economic ties with the West.

What started in Poland in July 1980 has not yet ended. The outcome is in doubt. Perhaps the only certainty is that the Polish

nation will continue to exist and that it will do so either in a new atmosphere of hope and renewal or in a state of greater dependence on the Soviet Union.

A Personal Epilogue

Difficult as it is accurately to analyze the current Polish scene, I have tried—with the invaluable help of FPA's editors and some outside experts—to present facts, Polish and non-Polish opinions, options and possibilities, as clearly and concisely as possible. Even so, many statements and views will probably be disputed. My only response is that I hope the ensuing debate will clarify, not confuse, and will help the reader to draw his own conclusions.

After two and one-half years as Ambassador to Poland, until October 1980, I have formed opinions which reflect impressions and feelings acquired from my contact with Poles—party and nonparty members, academics, businessmen and technocrats, dissidents, Church authorities, including Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Wyszynski—as well as with Polish-Americans and informed observers of Poland.

Ever since July 1980 experts have extensively analyzed the continuing Polish drama, but there are many factors that bear on developments in Eastern Europe which defy logical analysis. It is conventional wisdom to refer to the romanticism and strong nationalism which mark the Polish national character. From the mouths and pens of experts these references seem almost passionless, unlike the emotions they are meant to describe. These sentiments—by whatever name—are real and characterize the high and the low, the powerful and the powerless, the worker and the peasant, the priest and the intellectual *and* the leaders of the Polish Communist party. Having observed some of the principal players, I have concluded that they are acting more as

Poles than as Communists. In fact, beneath that layer of doctrinaire ideology which has formed their political, economic and social philosophies, they may even be proud of what their fellow citizens in Solidarity have accomplished, just as they were proud of the election of a Polish Pope. They may not necessarily agree with Walesa and his followers, but they very possibly admire their strength, resourcefulness, patriotism, stamina and just pure "Polishness," which every Pole would like to see in his epitaph.

The party leaders no less than anyone else oppose Soviet intervention in Poland. Nor do they wish to engage in internal repression. There are solid, rational, political as well as sentimental reasons for that. Without compromising their belief in communism in the slightest, some Polish leaders have become convinced that communism in Poland has too much Soviet and not enough Polish flavor. Steeped in Polish history, including the ancient hostility to the Russians, and with an understanding of Polish society, they accept as almost normal the peculiarly Polish anomalies of a powerful Church, private agriculture and relative liberality in human rights.

If this analysis is right, the unprecedented concessions already made to Solidarity and other independent groups should be seen not only as a result of party weakness—which they are—but also as an attempt to preserve the Polish nature of change and Polish control of Polish destiny. The Polish leadership is no less Communist than it ever was, but Poles still do not cease being Poles. Similar statements can be made about other nations, but I suspect these elements may be more pronounced among Poles than among many other nationalities.

Another striking feature of the Polish scene is the seeming patience of the Polish population. In addition to the political, labor and social turmoil to which they have been subject in the past year, their lives, from all accounts, have become more difficult since I left Poland in the fall of 1980. Poles have been waiting in line for the most prosaic of goods ever since the end of World War II, and one may argue that they are used to it. Even before the events of 1980 there was consistent grumbling about

the lines. Newspaper accounts and correspondence and communication with friends and acquaintances there indicate that the lines are not only longer but the choice of goods is much smaller. The long Polish winter must have been even worse than usual with the increasing shortage of coal, the source of over 90 percent of Poland's energy. Yet there is no sign that the population has become overly weary of the pace, complex changes or disturbances caused by the events of the last year. They may at some future time, but the toleration of uncertainty tends to keep up the pressure on the party and encourages Solidarity. It is true that the number of Poles seeking refuge in the West has increased, but the numbers have not been overwhelming and, I believe, most will return when the situation becomes more stable.

In the year since I have returned from Poland I have made many speeches and talked with many experts—Kremlinologists and experts on Poland itself. While I have cautioned my listeners not to become euphoric about the encouraging changes in Poland, which could be wiped out with a single Soviet decision, the experts, until last spring, nearly all tended to be pessimistic. The lessons of history and the nature of the Soviet regime logically led them to the conviction that Soviet intervention was probable, even inevitable. Many have now modified their views, but I would caution the reader again that this long-playing drama is not over. The permanence of drastic change in Polish political, economic and social life will be tested continuously. But knowing the Poles, I have learned to respect their vigor and faith, which have been abundantly demonstrated in the past year.

Talking It Over

A Note for Students and Discussion Groups

This pamphlet, like its predecessors in the HEADLINE Series, is published for every serious reader, specialized or not, who takes an interest in the subject. Many of our readers will be in classrooms, seminars or community discussion groups. Particularly with them in mind, we present below some discussion questions—suggested as a starting point only—and references for further reading.

Discussion Questions

Why is the Polish past so important to an understanding of present-day Poland?

What special characteristics distinguish Poland from its Communist neighbors?

Why has the Catholic Church played so prominent a role in Poland's history? What is its present role?

What gains has Solidarity made? Should it consolidate what it has achieved so far, or should it continue pressing the government to make further concessions? Is there a line which Solidarity dare not cross?

What should be the Polish government's policy toward Solidarity? Should it join its drive for renewal? continue to treat it as an adversary? seek to absorb the momentum of the events of 1980–81 in order to return eventually to a more orthodox Communist system?

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Since 1918, the Foreign Policy Association has worked to help Americans gain a better understanding of problems in U.S. foreign policy and to stimulate informed citizen discussion of, and participation in, world affairs.

The Association is independent and nonpartisan, has no affiliation with government and takes no position on questions under debate. Rather, it seeks to call attention to, and to clarify opposing views on, those foreign policy issues which government and people must resolve in democratic partnership.

FPA's publications, in addition to the year-round HEADLINE Series, *include the annual* Great Decisions, *a briefing and discussion guide on eight current foreign policy topics. Reports on the annual* Great Decisions *"Opinion Ballots" are a valued index to the foreign policy views of informed citizens. Both directly and through the media support they receive, FPA publications reach out to more students, libraries, citizens and community groups than any other world affairs educational service today.*

FPA provides an open world affairs meeting service to the New York and Washington communities. Throughout the year, FPA's podium, with the opportunity of audience discussion, is offered to leaders, experts and institutions concerned with, and taking varying positions on, current issues of U.S. foreign policy.

By such means FPA seeks to achieve what Elihu Root emphasized in the early years of the Association's existence:

> "The control of foreign relations by modern democracies creates a new and pressing demand for popular education in international affairs."

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